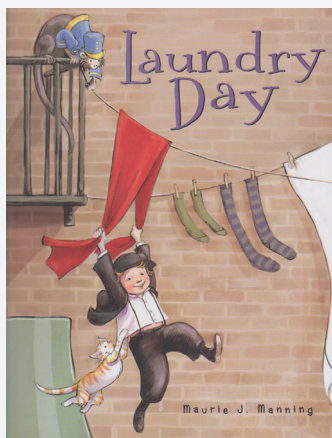


First Opinion: *Laundry Day*, More Than Just Bubbles

Manning, Maurie J. *Laundry Day*. New York:
Clarion Books/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.

Michelle Martin



A shoeshine boy with tools of his trade in hand greets potential customers warmly, but on this busy day in New York City, he can find no one willing to slow down long enough for a shoe shine. Through a stroke of luck, a dove (or perhaps it's a pigeon, given its urban habitat) drops a red scarf onto the boy's diminutive shoulders, which precipitates his search for its owners.

Though many of the double-page spreads and individual frames throughout this richly illustrated picture book are wordless, everyone the boy meets greets him warmly, from the elderly Ukrainian mother with her wailing baby, to the Italian musician with his dancing monkey, to the three little Polish girls who agree on nothing. They all also share a word or two in their own language with the shoeshine boy. The Ukrainian woman says that his scarf matches the embroidery on her "*rushnyk*" (Ukrainian embroidered hand towel). The musician calls the scarf a "*drappo*" (Italian for small cloth). When the boy leaves, the Polish sisters yell to him: "*Do widzenia!*" ("See you later" in Polish).

As the boy clambers up fire escapes, tiptoes over clotheslines hanging between buildings, scales high balconies, and slides down drainpipes attached to the building, both the pigeons and a little yellow tabby cat that appear on nearly every page give young readers a fun seek-and-find adventure. The frenetic energy of this teeming city full of people from all over the world throws readers right into the middle of early twentieth-century New York and the richness that immigrants brought to it. The presence of clothespins on clotheslines holding

outdated undergarments like lacy white bloomers and a red union suit with a buttoned back flap will also remind readers of the historical setting. Wonderful both for its illustrative detail and textual simplicity as well as for its representations of diverse New York City inhabitants, *Laundry Day* depicts much more than an afternoon filled with scrubbing and bubbles.

About the Author

As a child in South Carolina, **Michelle Martin** listened to New York Public Library's Augusta Baker tell stories. Today, she carries on Baker's legacy as the Augusta Baker Chair in Childhood Literacy at the University of South Carolina, where she conducts research on literacy and oversees literacy outreach programs throughout the state.